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Special Political and Decolonization Committee (Fourth Committee)

Summary record of the 24th meeting
Held at Headquarters, New York, on Monday, 11 November 2013, at 10 a.m.

Chair:	Mr. García González	(El Salvador)
later:	Ms. Rafti (Vice-Chair)	(Cyprus)
later:	Mr. García González (Chair)	(El Salvador)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Agenda item 52: Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories (*continued*) (A/68/313, A/68/355, A/68/378, A/68/379, A/68/502 and A/68/513)

1. **Ms. Sughayar** (Jordan) said that her Government deeply regretted Israel's continued refusal to allow the Special Committee to visit the Occupied Palestinian Territory. The report of the Special Committee (A/68/379), whose recommendations Jordan fully endorsed, painted a bleak picture of the deteriorating human rights situation of Palestinians in the Occupied Palestinian Territory as a result of illegal Israeli actions. Jordan called for a cessation of all Israeli unilateral measures and violations of international law and stood ready to assist Israel and Palestine in their quest for a genuine and lasting peace. It urged the parties to the conflict to intensify their efforts to resolve all key issues, including security, refugees and the status of Jerusalem, with a view to achieving a two-State solution on the basis of the June 1967 borders that preserves the legitimate right of Palestinians to an independent, sovereign State.

2. Israel must halt its provocative actions against holy sites in Jerusalem, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque, and comply with all international resolutions and conventions in that regard. Her Government condemned Israel's ongoing settlement-building activities, house demolitions, forced evictions of Palestinian civilians and devastating blockade of Gaza, which denied Palestinians their fundamental rights to health, education and freedom of movement, and seriously undermined the prospects for peace between Israelis and Palestinians. The international community had a duty to ensure that the inhabitants of the region enjoyed a more prosperous and stable future and lived dignified and peaceful lives. To that end, Jordan reaffirmed its commitment to work closely with all the relevant stakeholders to uphold the rights of the Palestinian people and fulfil the hopes of resolving one of the core issues in the Middle East region.

3. **Mr. Sharoni** (Israel) said that, instead of seeking to advance human rights or promote Palestinian development, the report of the Special Committee (A/68/379) furthered a one-sided narrative that turned a blind eye to the truth and only sought to discredit Israel. It was saturated with harsh criticisms of Israel, but failed to mention that over 10,000 rockets and mortar shells had been launched from the Gaza Strip against Israeli towns and villages since 2001. Apparently, the indiscriminate targeting of innocent Israeli men, women and children was not a matter worthy of the Special Committee's time and attention. The report was also silent on Hamas's well-known practice of concealing military installations in schools, hospitals, homes and in close proximity to United Nations facilities; on its repeated war crimes, including the use of civilians as human shields; and on the Palestinian authorities' persecution of homosexuals, failure to protect Christians' freedom of religion and women's rights, and mistreatment and imprisonment of journalists. Given the ample evidence that the Special Committee's conclusions had been predetermined, Israel would continue to refuse to cooperate with a body that had shown itself to be prejudiced from the outset.

4. Many positive developments in the West Bank and Gaza over the previous year, which had been acknowledged by international bodies, including the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, failed to make their way into the report of the Special Committee. Thousands of tons of food, medical equipment and construction materials entered the Gaza Strip from Israel every month and Israel was cooperating with United Nations agencies, international organizations and partner countries to advance development projects in Gaza, despite the fact that Gaza remained under the control of Hamas, a ruthless terrorist regime that was committed to Israel's destruction. Israel had approved 277 such projects in the previous three years and was in no way responsible for any delays in their implementation. It had also significantly increased the amount of building materials entering Gaza for private-sector construction projects. However, in exchange for its goods and goodwill, Israel was repaid with tunnels of terror, including a recently discovered two-kilometre tunnel built by Hamas using 500 tons of cement that had been earmarked for construction work. Instead of building houses and schools, Hamas was building smuggling tunnels and terror networks, and yet none of the Member States that were demanding that Israel should allow more cement into Gaza had condemned those crimes.

5. Israel continued to strengthen its economic cooperation with the Palestinians. In 2013, it had transferred approximately $850 million in tax revenues to the Palestinian Authority and had set up a new computer interface integrating Israeli and Palestinian customs and tax collection systems, which was enhancing the efficiency of the Palestinian customs system and increasing Palestinian Authority revenues. Furthermore, more than 100,000 Palestinians worked in Israel or were employed by Israelis in Judea and Samaria, contributing 10 per cent of Palestinian gross domestic product. In August 2013, Israel had issued an additional 5,000 work permits to Palestinians.

6. Israel also continued to support job creation initiatives for Palestinians and had participated in the dedication of a new Japanese-funded industrial park in Jericho that would create an estimated 7,000 new jobs. It was also striving to ease restrictions on the movement of people and goods in Judea and Samaria and had even permitted one million Palestinians to enter Israel during the most recent Ramadan holiday and throughout the summer. In the first half of 2013, more than 190,000 truckloads had passed through crossing points between Israel and the West Bank, an increase of 12 per cent over the same period in 2012, and more than 94,000 Palestinians had been treated in Israeli hospitals. Israel was upgrading the passenger terminal and installing a modern cargo scanner at the Allenby Bridge border crossing. It also supplied Judea and Samaria with more than 1,400 million gallons of water per year, 582 million gallons more than was required under the Oslo Accords.

7. The current meeting offered a window into the theatre of the absurd, which saw some of the world's most oppressive tyrannies condemning Israel's judicial system and human rights record. Rather than making cynical attacks on Israel, wasting the time and undermining the work of the Fourth Committee, they should work to improve their domestic human rights records. Israel was committed to achieving peace with the Palestinian people, as demonstrated by its recent release of 26 Palestinian prisoners convicted of murdering Israelis. His Government was ready to make a historic compromise and facilitate the creation of a demilitarized Palestinian State bordering the Jewish State of Israel. Palestinians and Israelis must strive to resolve their differences through direct negotiations built on a foundation of truth, mutual recognition and security. Israel invited its Arab neighbours to join it in taking concrete, courageous steps to foster lasting peace and called for an end to the inflammatory rhetoric that was constantly disrupting the work of the Committee. His delegation also urged Member States to refrain from supporting divisive United Nations resolutions and to use the Organization's scarce resources for their intended purpose, namely to improve people's lives.

8. **Mr. AlMahmoud** (Qatar) said that the report of the Special Committee (A/68/379) had highlighted a wide range of Israeli occupation practices that blatantly violated international law, international human rights law and the relevant United Nations resolutions, including the ill-treatment of Palestinian detainees, home demolitions, the construction of the separation wall, the condoning of settler violence, the stranglehold on the Palestinian economy, the denial of access to water resources and the violation of Islamic and Christian holy sites, particularly the Al-Aqsa Mosque. Israel must immediately desist from such practices and put an end to all settlement activities, which hindered the realization of a just and comprehensive peace.

9. The humanitarian situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, particularly the Gaza Strip, had continued to deteriorate. In the light of Israel's ongoing repression and repeated military assaults, the international community must take every available opportunity to affirm its absolute support for the Palestinian people. It must support the Palestinian side in pressing for a just and comprehensive peace in accordance with the Madrid terms of reference, the principle of land for peace, the Arab Peace Initiative and the road map to Middle East peace. An independent Palestinian State with East Jerusalem as its capital must be established on all of the Palestinian territory occupied in 1967. That solution reflected international consensus and had been underscored by the recognition of the State of Palestine as a non-member observer State in the United Nations. The Committee was therefore exercising a moral duty by considering the current agenda item.

10. **Ms. Bouhamidi** (Morocco) said that, although the United States Secretary of State had succeeded in bringing Israelis and Palestinians to the negotiating table, initial optimism had given way to apprehension. Those developments should in any case not distract attention from Israel's ongoing settlement policy in Palestinian towns and villages, which had turned the

lives of millions of Palestinians into a nightmare. Homes had been destroyed and agricultural land bulldozed in order to expand settlements and thereby create facts on the ground that would preclude a two-State solution. Israel must honour its commitments pursuant to international law and implement the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War of 12 August 1949 (Fourth Geneva Convention) in the occupied Palestinian Arab lands, including East Jerusalem and other Arab lands occupied by Israel since 1967. The city of East Jerusalem was the main target of the Israeli authorities' policy of altering local demographics and tightening their stranglehold on the Palestinians, forcing them to emigrate.

11. As current Chair of the Al-Quds Committee of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation, Morocco recalled the importance of compliance with United Nations resolutions which called on Israel to cease all actions causing the alteration of the characteristics of the city of Jerusalem; any changes made thereto would be null and void on account of the spiritual role of the city for both Muslims and Christians. Israeli forces and settlers had recently attacked students and worshippers at the Al-Aqsa Mosque, preventing them from expressing their religious convictions. The Mughrabi Gate had been demolished and excavations around the Al-Aqsa Mosque had been intensified. Such acts of provocation were inconsistent with the peace process and were part of a systematic attempt to Judaize occupied East Jerusalem.

12. The Israeli occupation was exacerbating the economic difficulties of the Palestinian people. It was essential to support the Palestinian Authority, whose financial plight was hampering its ability to promote development, as well as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), whose budget deficit could affect the humanitarian services offered to the refugee population. The international community must intervene to uphold the rights of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, who continued to suffer unlawful treatment, and demand that Israel lift its illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, which amounted to collective punishment. The current negotiations must be intensified in a spirit of good faith in accordance with the relevant United Nations resolutions, the principle of land for peace, the Madrid terms of reference, the Arab Peace Initiative and the Quartet road map, with a view to a just and comprehensive two-State solution and the establishment of an independent, contiguous and internationally recognized State of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital.

13. *Ms. Rafti (Cyprus), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.*

14. **Mr. Selim** (Egypt) expressed grave concern at the long-standing pattern of systematic violations of human rights, including the rights of children, committed by Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. Israel was perpetrating even graver violations than it had in the past. In Gaza, its ongoing blockade, which constituted a form of collective punishment, continued to inflict grave suffering on the Palestinian civilian population, particularly women and children, in clear violation not only of their human rights but also of international law. Its unlawful actions in the occupied Syrian Golan was also a clear violation of international law. His Government demanded that Israel fully lift that illegal blockade, in accordance with Security Council resolution 1860 (2009), open all its border crossings into Gaza, comply with all relevant United Nations resolutions, including Security Council resolution 497 (1981), and withdraw completely to the 4 June 1967 borders.

15. **Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon) said that Israel's ongoing dictatorship over the Palestinians was neither normal nor viable. While the overwhelming majority of Palestinians remained refugees, Israel continued to defy the collective will of the international community as expressed in numerous United Nations resolutions, including General Assembly resolution 194 (III), which affirmed Palestinians' right to return to their homeland. Moreover, Israel's ongoing expansion of its illegal settlements, in clear violation of international law, was undermining any possibility of a territorially contiguous State of Palestine.

16. Israel had constructed 441 miles of its apartheid wall, killed 7,000 Palestinians and demolished 25,000 Palestinian homes in the West Bank. Moreover, Israeli settlers, emboldened with a sense of impunity, continued to terrorize Palestinian civilians, including children, attacking their businesses, homes and schools. Palestinian children were routinely arrested in the middle of the night by Israeli soldiers and locked in solitary confinement for days or weeks at a time. In prison, they were often denied food and water and subjected to physical and verbal abuse. As at June 2013, 193 children, including 41 below the age of 16,

were being held in Israeli detention, in blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Israeli soldiers had also reportedly used Palestinian children as human shields, forcing them to enter potentially dangerous buildings ahead of them and to stand in front of military vehicles to deter stone throwers. Israel also discriminated against the Palestinian population by restricting their access to their own water resources, while making an abundant amount of those water resources readily available to Israeli settlers. Her Government condemned that practice, as Israel was legally obliged to facilitate Palestinians' access to their water, land and olive trees.

17. Israel must completely lift its seven-year blockade of Gaza, which had created the world's largest prison camp. Her Government was deeply concerned that 70 per cent of the population of Gaza depended on international aid to survive and that 90 per cent of drinking water in that area was unfit for human consumption. While Member States were making every effort to facilitate progress in negotiations between Israelis and Palestinians, numerous statements and actions by the Israeli authorities continued to undermine the quest for peace. Any measures taken by Israel that prejudged final-status issues would not be recognized by the international community.

18. *Mr. García González (El Salvador) resumed the Chair.*

19. **Mr. Sahraei** (Islamic Republic of Iran) said that the report of the Special Committee (A/68/379) showed that Israel continued to violate the fundamental human rights of Palestinians and other Arabs living under its occupation. The Israeli regime had adopted a policy of brutal oppression, aggression and bloodshed, and its claim to be striving to achieve peace with the Palestinians served merely to distract world attention while it pursued its expansionist policies and perpetrated its appalling crimes, including extrajudicial killings, targeted assassinations, house demolitions, the construction of an expansionist wall and the imprisonment of thousands of Palestinians.

20. His delegation reiterated its condemnation of the Israeli regime's blockade of the Gaza Strip, which constituted a form of collective punishment crime against humanity and posed a serious threat to regional stability. The Israeli regime had also intensified its illegal settlement activities in occupied Jerusalem and beyond, attempting to further colonize the Occupied Palestinian Territory and change its demographic balance. That campaign was a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention and its Additional Protocol I and numerous United Nations resolutions, and flew in the face of the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice of 9 July 2004, entitled "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory". His delegation was also deeply concerned about the deterioration of the human rights situation and the increase in illegal Jewish settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan, which was an integral part of the territory of the Syrian Arab Republic.

21. Israel's occupation of Palestine and other Arab territories and its refusal to comply with international law lay at the heart of the protracted crisis in the Middle East. All peace initiatives would fail unless they addressed the root causes of the question of Palestine, namely the occupation and the issue of the Palestine refugees. His Government believed that all Muslim, Christian and Jewish Palestinians with a legitimate stake in the territory of Palestine, including, in particular the Palestine refugees, were entitled to decide their future in a referendum. A permanent and durable settlement of the question of Palestine could be achieved only when the rights of the Palestinian people were fully upheld, when Israel ended its illegal occupation, and when an independent and viable Palestinian State was established, with Al-Quds al-Sharif as its capital.

22. **Mr. Al-Saiyani** (Yemen) noted that Israel, the occupying Power, continued to violate international law, the Fourth Geneva Convention and numerous United Nations resolutions with its ongoing construction of the separation wall and expansion of settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. It also continued to murder, starve and oppress Palestinians, mistreat Palestinian detainees, impose collective punishment, confiscate land, close border crossings and turn Gaza into the world's largest prison. The Special Committee's report (A/68/379) described the human rights impact of the Gaza blockade, the restrictions on movement within the Gaza Strip and the denial of basic commodities to its residents. Children in the Gaza Strip now suffered from malnutrition and were unable to travel in order to receive care abroad.

23. He called on the international community and the Security Council to work for a resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict and reaffirmed the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to an independent State, with East Jerusalem as its capital. His delegation also condemned illegal Israeli settlement expansion and resource exploitation in the occupied Syrian Golan. The international community should put pressure on Israel to cease its violations of international law, comply with United Nations resolutions and withdraw from all the occupied Arab territories.

24. **Mr. Odisho** (Iraq) said that Israel had continued to defy the United Nations and the international community by expanding settlements, destroying Palestinian homes and refusing building permission to Palestinians. Its aim was to alter the legal status, geography and demographic composition of the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem. Palestinians, many of them under 16 years of age, were frequently detained without trial. Israel had maintained its jurisdiction over the occupied Syrian Golan since 1981, although that situation had been determined by Security Council resolution 497 (1981) to be null and void and without international legal effect. The international community must prevail on the Israeli occupation authorities to comply with international law and conventions, particularly the Fourth Geneva Convention, and immediately desist from attempting to alter the legal status of the occupied Arab territories. Iraq would continue to support the inalienable rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to establish an independent State on the territory of Palestine, with Jerusalem as its capital.

25. **Mr. Taguri** (Libya) said that his country was alarmed at the dramatic increase in the number of illegal Israeli settlers in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and at Israel's plans to build additional housing units in settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Moreover, Israeli settlers continued to act with impunity, harassing and physically assaulting Palestinians and destroying their property and religious sites. Israel's blockade of Gaza was causing great suffering among the civilian population there and the brutal separation wall that it was building in the West Bank, blatantly disregarding an advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice that affirmed the illegality of that wall under international law, was severely impeding Palestinian's economic activity and freedom of movement. The occupation authorities continued to hold thousands of Palestinians in detention, including children younger than 16 years of age. Palestinian prisoners were mistreated and tortured, kept in solitary confinement and denied visits from their families. Israel also continued to demolish Palestinian homes, particularly in East Jerusalem as part of its deliberate policy to Judaize that city.

26. The Israeli regime's deliberate discriminatory policies were undermining all efforts to achieve peace in the region and Palestinians' right to an independent State. The international community had a responsibility to compel Israel to end its occupation and facilitate efforts to achieve a comprehensive solution that addressed the tragedy that had befallen the Palestinian people and upheld their right of return and their right to an independent Palestinian State, with Jerusalem as its capital. In the occupied Syrian Golan, Israel continued to expand its settlements, violate the human rights of the Arab inhabitants, and exploit their water and economic resources, in clear violation of international law. Israel must immediately withdraw from the occupied Syrian Golan, in accordance with Security Council resolution 497 (1981).

27. **Mr. AlJaraliah** (Kuwait) said that the Special Committee was to be commended for producing its report under extremely difficult conditions. That report highlighted Israel's ongoing, arbitrary and illegal practices in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, which violated the principles of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and had markedly increased the suffering of Palestinians. Israel had, in fact, been acting more belligerently towards the Palestinians since the General Assembly had voted to confer on Palestine the status of non-member observer State in the United Nations. Kuwait strongly condemned Israel's settlement-building campaign and called on it to take immediate and tangible steps to put a stop to settler violence against Palestinians, investigate all settler attacks and bring the perpetrators to justice. It must also comply with the 2004 advisory opinion on the International Court of Justice entitled "Legal Consequences of the Construction of a Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory".

28. His Government fully supported the Palestinian people in their struggle for an independent State. He therefore denounced the inhumane, illegal blockade of Gaza and called on Israel to release all political prisoners and withdraw from the occupied Syrian

Golan and Lebanese territories. His delegation reiterated its support for Palestine's full membership in the United Nations, which would constitute a step towards a just and lasting peace. In that regard, Kuwait appreciated the ongoing efforts to resume the peace process and called on Israel to implement the recommendations of the Special Committee, cease its flagrant violations of international humanitarian law in the occupied territories, and abide by the resolutions of the United Nations and other initiatives that sought to bring a lasting and just peace to the region.

29. **Mr. Alkaabi** (United Arab Emirates) said that his country was deeply concerned that Israel had barred members of the Special Committee from visiting the Occupied Palestinian Territory, forcing the Special Committee to rely on eyewitness accounts and reports by the media, non-governmental organizations and United Nations bodies in order to compile its most recent report. That report contained ample evidence of Israel's continued systematic aggression against the Palestinians and other Arabs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, including expansion of illegal settlements, construction of the separation wall, land confiscations, house demolitions, population transfers, destruction of infrastructure and agricultural land, violent actions perpetrated by Israeli settlers, denial of rightful residence, and restrictions on the movement of persons. Israel was also exploiting the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan, preventing family reunifications and refusing to remove its many thousands of landmines, which continued to kill innocent civilians, including children.

30. His Government called upon the international community to compel Israel to comply fully with international human rights and humanitarian law and fulfil all its obligations under the Fourth Geneva Convention and other international instruments. The international community must also ensure that the recommendations contained in the Special Committee's report (A/68/379) were implemented and that the mandate of the Office for the United Nations Register of Damage Caused by the Construction of the Wall in the Occupied Palestinian Territory was strengthened. The goal would be to ensure that Israel paid suitable compensation to Palestinians and residents of the occupied Syrian Golan for all the human, material and psychological damage caused by its occupation. He hoped that the General Assembly would also strengthen the Special Committee's mandate.

31. **Mr. Ben Sliman** (Tunisia) said that the Special Committee report highlighted Israel's ongoing violations of international human rights law and the fundamental rights of Palestinians. Provocative declarations by Israeli officials also made it clear that the occupying Power was determined to defy the will of the international community and perpetuate its occupation. Israel's infrastructure of occupation, including its settlements, checkpoints and the separation wall, continued to disrupt the lives of Palestinians and strangle their economy. It also jeopardized the viability of a two-State solution, the only possible lasting and durable outcome of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Tunisia therefore condemned Israel's ongoing settlement activity and called on the international community to compel Israel to desist from its flagrant breaches of international law and the fundamental tenets of the peace process. It also condemned Israel's confiscation of Palestinian land, attacks by Israeli occupation forces and settlers against Palestinians and their property, harassment and humiliation of Palestinian civilians, Israel's attempts to Judaize the city of Jerusalem, and its violations of that city's Muslim and Christian sites, especially the Al-Aqsa Mosque.

32. The international community must provide adequate financial support to the Palestinian Authority so that it could continue to provide key services to Palestinians. Although Israel had recently eased some restrictions on goods entering the Gaza Strip, that was insufficient: the blockade of Gaza must be lifted completely so that Palestinian civilians could resume their normal lives. The recognition of the State of Palestine as a non-member observer State in the United Nations was a major milestone in the Palestinian people's struggle for justice. The resumption of peace talks between the Palestinians and Israel was another auspicious development that must be supported fully by the international community. Any lasting peace agreement must provide for the establishment of a fully independent State of Palestine on all the territories occupied in 1967, with East Jerusalem as its capital, living side by side with Israel.

33. **Mr. Maope** (Lesotho) said that human rights were universal and could not be denied to Palestinians and other Arabs living under Israeli occupation. His delegation was deeply concerned about the high

number of Palestinians held in Israeli detention, including children less than 12 years of age who had been illegally abducted from their homes in blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The report of the Special Committee highlighted the plight of 500 prisoners who had been held in solitary confinement and denied medical treatment and family visits. It was incumbent on the occupying Power to ensure that detainees in its prisons were held in sanitary conditions and provided with adequate food and appropriate medical care. Lesotho was also alarmed at Israel's ongoing settlement-building activities, house demolitions, forced expulsions, construction of the separation wall, and permission to multinational corporations to exploit the natural resources of the Occupied Palestinian Territory and the occupied Syrian Golan, even though, as an occupying Power, it was prohibited from doing so under international law. Israel must immediately halt all those practices, which impeded the achievement of a two-State solution.

34. Israel could not evade its obligations under international law. Its refusal to comply with the numerous United Nations resolutions affirming the applicability of the Fourth Geneva Convention to the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and to all other Arab territories occupied by Israel since 1967 undermined the very principles upon which the Organization had been established. Israel must ensure the welfare of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and should not transfer its own citizens into the territories it occupied. Moreover, the collective punishment of Palestinians and other Arabs in the occupied territories was totally unacceptable. The conflict between Israel and Palestine could only be resolved through negotiations in which the sovereign equality of the two parties and their legitimate concerns were acknowledged. Lesotho called on Israel to cooperate fully with the Special Committee and reiterated its support for the two-State solution, which was the only plausible way to bring enduring peace and stability to the region.

35. **Mr. Doucouré** (Mali) said that reports of serious violations of international humanitarian and human rights law in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan reminded the world that the conflict that had been tearing apart the Middle East for over six decades remained unresolved. Mali fully supported the rights of Arabs living in the territories occupied by Israel since 1967 and all initiatives to bring an end to the illegal Israeli practices mentioned in the report of the Special Committee (A/68/379), including unlawful detentions, torture, the blockade of Gaza, settlement expansion, the demolition of Palestinian property, forced resettlement, settler violence and the illegal exploitation of the natural resources of the occupied Syrian Golan.

36. Mali also supported the recommendations of the Special Committee, particularly its call for Israel to comply with international human rights instruments, including the Fourth Geneva Convention and the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Palestinians must be permitted to exercise their right to return to their homes and reclaim their property, their rights to self-determination and to sovereignty over their territory and their natural resources, and their right to establish an independent national authority. In order for Palestinians to exercise those rights, Israel must withdraw completely from the territories it had occupied since 1967 and lift all restrictions on the movement of goods and people. Mali believed that it was only through direct negotiations between the parties themselves that a comprehensive and lasting peace could be achieved. It therefore urged all stakeholders with influence in the region to do all they could to facilitate efforts to achieve a just, comprehensive and lasting peace settlement.

37. **Mr. Mohamed** (Sudan) said that the report of the Special Committee highlighted the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian population in the Occupied Palestinian Territory and showed that Israel's violations of international humanitarian and human rights law, including murder, arbitrary detentions, home demolitions and destruction of property, continued unabated. Israel's illegal settlement-building activity, which was causing additional hardship for Palestinians, was undermining any hope of achieving a two-State solution, and its inhumane blockade of Gaza, which was utterly incompatible with human rights principles and international humanitarian law, had turned that area into a vast prison camp. His delegation strongly supported the Palestinian people and leadership in their efforts to establish an independent State, with Al Quds al-Sharif as its capital. It was high time for the international community to put an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and its violations of United Nations resolutions and international instruments. Israel must be compelled to

implement all Security Council resolutions on the question of Palestine and must withdraw completely from Lebanese territory and the occupied Syrian Golan.

38. **Ms. Moreno Guerra** (Cuba) said that her delegation deeply appreciated the work of the Special Committee, which had been made especially difficult by the Israeli Government's steadfast refusal to grant its members access to the territories covered by the Special Committee's mandate. Its report made it clear, however, that the situation of Palestinians had not improved. Cuba was particularly concerned about the frequent reports of prisoner abuse and medical negligence with regard to the 5,000 Palestinian detainees being held by Israel, which included 160 administrative detainees. Moreover, 20 Palestinian prisoners were on hunger strike to draw attention to the abuse of their rights and the inhumane conditions in which they were held. Israel was also holding 193 children in detention, 41 of them under the age of 16, in blatant violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention.

39. Israel was rapidly expanding its illegal settlements in the West Bank while placing onerous restrictions on construction by Palestinians and the movement of people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, further undermining Palestinian rights. Poverty levels were rising, particularly in Gaza, where 80 per cent of the inhabitants depended on humanitarian aid and 57 per cent of households had been classified as food-insecure in 2012. The Israeli authorities systematically used force against a defenceless population, including women, children and the elderly and, since June 2012, a total of 311 attacks had been perpetrated against Palestinian communities by Israeli settlers. Between May 2012 and April 2013, 464 Palestinian structures had been demolished, leading to the displacement of over 400 people. Her Government condemned all those practices and stressed that the violation of Palestinian rights would only cease when Israel ended its occupation.

40. Efforts by the international community to resolve the conflict had been ineffectual and the Israeli authorities had been brazenly flouting international law. The Security Council had been unable to make any headway on the issue because one of its members was always using or threatening to use its veto power. Israel's policies cast doubt on whether that country truly wanted peace. All actions taken by Israel to change the legal status and demographic character of the occupied Syrian Golan were incompatible with the Charter of the United Nations and null and void under international law. Cuba supported the Palestinian people's inalienable right to an independent sovereign State, with East Jerusalem as its capital, and demanded the unconditional return of all Palestinian land, which was the only means by which a just and lasting peace could be achieved.

Statements in exercise of the right of reply

41. **Ms. Abdelhady-Nasser** (Observer for Palestine) said that the report of the Special Committee was neither biased nor one-sided. The Special Committee had conducted its investigations on the basis of international law and United Nations resolutions. It had not distorted the truth nor had it sought to discredit Israel. Instead, it had reported facts that highlighted Israel's ongoing egregious and systematic human rights abuses, many of which amounted to war crimes. Israel had not been singled out by the Special Committee but by its blatant, deliberate and consistent non-compliance with international law and its complete disrespect for the United Nations and the international community. Israel, however, continued to try to justify its violations by distorting the truth and attacking those who spoke it. The core of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was Israel's occupation of Palestinian and Arab lands and its oppression and subjugation of the Palestinian people. Merely easing restrictions would not resolve that conflict: lessening a crime while still committing that crime was a flawed and destructive logic.

42. It was only by recognizing the rights of the Palestinian people and ending Israel's illegitimate occupation that peace between Palestine and Israel could be realized and that the Palestinian people could truly know the freedom, security, peace and dignity that had been denied them for so many decades. For Israel to claim that ending its belligerent military occupation would constitute a compromise was deeply offensive. By ending its occupation, Israel would merely be abiding by international law and United Nations resolutions. The international community's position regarding Israel's illegal practices in occupied Palestine was a clear answer to Israel's derisive rhetoric and intransigence and had been reflected in the many statements delivered in the Fourth Committee and the Security Council and in the principled and overwhelming support of the General Assembly for resolutions affirming the rights of the Palestinian

people. The international community must remain firm in its rejection of Israel's arguments and demand that Israel comply with international law.

43. **Mr. Sharoni** (Israel) said that by making baseless accusations against Israel, several delegations were trampling on democracy in the Fourth Committee, just as their countries trampled on their peoples' freedom. It was most unfortunate that certain delegations insisted on monopolizing the valuable time of the Committee and making cynical attacks that undermined its professional nature. It was also truly absurd to hear delegations from some of the most oppressive tyrannies lecture Israel about human rights, rather than devote more attention to upholding the rights and freedoms of the women and minorities oppressed by their Governments. Israel was particularly shocked by the audacious remarks by the representative of Lebanon, a country mired in violence and corruption that committed countless human rights abuses. The hands of the Lebanese regime, which was deeply involved in the fighting in Syria, were stained with the blood of innocent Syrian civilians. The Palestinians in the refugee camps in Lebanon endured appalling living conditions and brutal economic and social discrimination and ongoing acts of violence and oppression.

44. **Ms. Ziade** (Lebanon) said that it was unacceptable for Israel to try to hijack the debate in order to prevent the Committee from addressing the agenda item under discussion. The Lebanese delegation had referred only to the report of the Special Committee and other relevant United Nations documents. Lebanon, a founding member of the United Nations, hosted thousands of Palestinian refugees because Israel refused to end its occupation of Arab land. Unlike Israel, Lebanon complied with international law.

The meeting rose at 12.10 p.m.